



March 5, 2015

Testimony in Support of HB-6855

**Program Review and Investigation Committee Recommendations
Regarding Residential Service at the Rock Hill Veterans' Home**

Good evening Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. I am Dan Thurston, Chairman of the Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition (the Coalition). The Coalition is made up of Veterans Service Organizations and Military Service Organization that work together to serve and assist the military and veterans' community in Connecticut.

I am here today to express the Coalition's support of the committee's recommendation regarding the Rocky Hill Veterans' Home.

The Leadership of the American Veterans (AMVETS), the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), met in January and voted to draft a resolution in support to the PRI Committee recommendations regarding the Veterans' Home. That resolution, which is attached, was formally approved on January 20, 2015 and signed by the leadership of the member organizations of the Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition.

The resolution supports the findings of the committees' four (4) recommendations, to transform the Home's domiciliary care into transitional and permanent supportive housing, ensure that the Home continues to providing both substance use treatment services and high quality health care.

The recommendations also seek to improve oversight, program monitoring and input from the residents regarding operation of the Home. The Coalition strongly believes that the active participation on the Board of Trustees by Veterans will be an asset in shaping the future of the Veterans' Home and meeting the future needs of the veteran's community in Connecticut.

Raised Bill No. 6855, Sec. 4 (a), redefines the composition of the Board of Directors to require two (2) members to be representatives of Connecticut veterans' organizations. The Coalition in its resolution recommended that eight (8) members be from veterans' organization and that they be appointed by the State Commander or elected state official for that veterans' organization to be eligible to serve on the Board. The veterans' organizations in Connecticut have membership that is both culturally and professionally suited to meet the criteria as required by the legislation.

I urge the Committee to consider including up to 8 veterans, each from a different organization to be on the Board. A feasible method would be to have veterans' organizations submit nominations to the Governor for his consideration.



CONNECTICUT VETERANS & MILITARY COALITION

c/o Officers and Enlisted Club of Connecticut, 360 Broad St., Hartford, CT 06105

Veterans connect with Veterans. The appointment of veterans with varied professional and cultural backgrounds as well as their connection to the veterans' community in Connecticut will provide a solid foundation for moving the Rocky Hill Veterans' Home into the future.

On behalf of the Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition member organizations, I thank you for your time to allow us to express support for our Military and Veterans and for your commitment to the Veterans and Citizens of Connecticut. This concludes my testimony and I am available for any questions you may have.

Respectful Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Daniel C. Thurston'.

Daniel C. Thurston

Chairman Connecticut Veterans and Military Coalition

State Vice-Commander, American Veterans (AMVETS), Connecticut

Vietnam Veteran, USAF

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Resolution: Support for 2014 Legislative Program Review Committee study on the Rocky Hill Veterans Home.

WHEREAS, The Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition shares and supports the concerns and findings of the Program Review Committee study that was authorized in May 2014 by the Legislature and base on their report of December 2014, (PRI Staff Findings and Recommendations Highlights); and

WHEREAS, the Rocky Hill Board of Trustees be responsible and responsive to the needs and concerns of the residents of the Rocky Hill Veterans Home; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition in regular meeting, on January 20, 2015, fully supports the State of Connecticut completing all of the PRI Staff Recommendations and 4 key goals recommended on the December 2014 PRI Staff Findings and Recommendations Highlights to:

1. Transform the Home's domiciliary care into transitional and permanent supportive housing, in terms of program design, staffing, rules, responsibilities, fees and communications.
2. Ensure the Home's substance use treatment services are high-quality and possibly accessible to more veterans;
3. Maintain quality at the Health Care Facility; and
4. Improve collaborative, oversight, program monitoring, and opportunities for residents' views to be heard; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that The Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal by the Connecticut General Assembly and Governor to include eight seats on the Rocky Hill Board of Trustees. The eight seats shall be filled by Federally Chartered Veterans Service Organizations in Connecticut as appointed by the State Commander of said organization. No Veterans Service Organization shall have more than one seat on the Board; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees not be the current State Commissioner of Veteran Affairs.

Respectively Submitted,

Daniel C. Thurston

Chairman, Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition (CVMC)

State Vice-Commander, American Veterans of Connecticut

Legislative Director, American Veterans of Connecticut (AMVETS)



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The following Organizations have expressed their support for the Connecticut Veterans & Military Coalition resolution for the support of the 2014 Legislative Program Review Committee study on the Rocky Hill Veterans Home as adopted 20 January 2015.

Harry Hanson
Department Commander
THE AMERICAN LEGION

Joseph Seigny
Board of Representatives
242nd Engineer Association of Connecticut

Dana Dillon
Commander, Department of Connecticut
American Veterans, (AMVETS)

Dan McHale, BG (Ret-CT)
President, Connecticut Chapter
Association of the U.S. Army, (AUSA)

Martin Levitz
Commander, Department of Connecticut
Jewish War Veterans, (JWV)

Tom Pandolfi
Vice-Chair
Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve,
(ESGR)

Juan L. Cruz
State President
Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut

Brian Baker
Assistant Director
South Park Inn, Hartford

Gary Ottenbreit
Board Member
102nd Infantry Regiment Association

William Brewer
Department Commander
Military Order of the Purple Heart, (MOPH)

H. Gregory Forbush
Legislative Officer
Marine Corps League

Barry J. Bernier
Commander, Department of Connecticut
Disabled American Veterans, (DAV)

Patti Duhon
President, CT State Council
Vietnam Veterans of America